United Nations S/PV.7855

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7855th meeting
Saturday, 31 December 2016, 1 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi	(Spain)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Martins
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Toro-Carnevali

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 29 December 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation and the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/1133)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

The meeting was called to order at 1 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 29 December 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation and the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/1133)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/1138, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the Russian Federation and Turkey.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/1133, which contains a letter dated 29 December 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations and the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2336 (2016).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): Yesterday, we learned from our Russian colleagues about a proposed arrangement that Russia and Turkey had concluded to introduce a cessation of hostilities and restart intra-Syrian discussions. Their goals are laudable and we welcome all efforts to end the violence in Syria and strongly support a nationwide ceasefire accompanied by unfettered humanitarian access to all besieged areas.

That having been said, we are still learning more about this initiative, including details regarding its implementation. In this regard, we regret that the annexes to the agreements, which outline the ceasefire arrangement brokered by Russia and Turkey in detail, have not yet been made available.

We voted in favour of resolution 2336 (2016) because it strikes the right balance between cautious optimism and support, predicated on hope but tempered by a realistic need to wait to see how this arrangement is implemented before casting the full weight of the Security Council behind it. We would highlight two key points.

Our hope is that a ceasefire will truly hold and will not serve as a justification for further unacceptable offensives. In that regard, we are concerned at reports of a regime offensive, supported by Hizbullah militia, in Wadi Barada. The Security Council's adoption of this text should be seen as a strong signal that such activities must cease.

We have also seen press reports that some signatories are concerned about differences between regime and opposition versions of delegation documents. In that regard, we hope that the reconciliation of any differences — or an explanation of why there are differences — will occur swiftly. We especially stress that paragraph 2 of the resolution just adopted emphasizes the need for the full implementation of resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016). Likewise, it is clear from paragraph 3 that talks in Astana will relate directly to the United Nations process.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): France is in favour of any initiative to save civilian lives in Syria. It was in that spirit that, on 16 December, it proposed a draft resolution to deploy an evacuation monitoring mechanism in Aleppo. It is for those same reasons that France today voted in favour of resolution 2336 (2016).

France hopes that this ceasefire agreement will be implemented immediately and calls on the guarantors to assume their full responsibilities in this

regard. The text of the Russian-Turkish agreement, as partially presented to the Security Council yesterday, nevertheless still contains areas of obscurity.

France's first concern concerns the genuine adherence of the Syrian parties to the truce agreement, while bombardments have been carried out by the regime in violation of the agreement in the past 48 hours, while a regime offensive, supported by Iran, is still under way in the Barada valley. The Security Council has received no document signed by the regime or opposition groups. The list of groups considering themselves to be parties to the agreement has not been communicated to us. Russia said that some groups had mandated others to accede to the agreement, which is not corroborated by the texts that have been transmitted to us.

Under these conditions, the degree of commitment of the parties to the truce appears relatively uncertain and its implementation fragile. In particular, France considers that the cessation of hostilities must apply to all armed groups, with the exception of groups designated as terrorists by the Security Council. Armed groups that are not parties to the cessation of hostilities should not automatically be regarded as terrorists.

It is also essential that the monitoring of compliance with the ceasefire be coordinated with the United Nations. In this respect, France would have liked to be able to study, with its partners, the modalities of extending the monitoring arrangements provided for in resolution 2328 (2016) to other localities in Syria. France remains at the disposal of the guarantors to consider a rigorous and impartial monitoring mechanism.

All the efforts of the international community must now be aimed at facilitating the resumption of the negotiations to be held on 8 February under the auspices of Staffan de Mistura, to whom we reiterate our full support. The preparatory exercises must fall within the framework defined by resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). The Astana meeting could be a useful first step in that regard. To that end, the process of appointing opposition representatives to the Astana meeting should be transparent. However, it raises important questions. France recalls that the High Negotiation Committee is the legitimate representative of the opposition in the inter-Syrian negotiations. There can be no credible exercise that excludes it.

France hopes that the discussions on these points will continue in a transparent manner with a view to an effective political transition, which is essential if Syria is to recover and begin its reconstruction. France remains fully committed to the search for a lasting solution to the conflict, which has lasted too long.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): New Zealand welcomes the efforts of Russia, Turkey and others to reduce the level of fighting in Syria. We also welcome the efforts of the presidency, Russia and Turkey, and all other Council members to work for the adoption of a resolution that all Council members could support. That is a demonstration of what the Council can do when we turn our collective minds to achieving a positive outcome. We are very pleased, therefore, that the Council could put its weight behind a measure designed to reduce civilian suffering in Syria and restart the political process.

As others have said, there are aspects of the ceasefire and other agreements that must be clarified. In particular, there are uncertainties about the participation of opposition groups in the ceasefire and the Astana talks. The implications for groups that are not participating should also be clarified. New Zealand would also welcome greater clarity about humanitarian access and the role of the United Nations in the Astana political process. That said, we are pleased that the Council was able to come together to support this important development.

New Zealand's term on the Security Council will end very soon. We hope that further clarity will be provided and that this agreement will alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people and help to put Syria on a path to a lasting and enduring peace. Since this is, I hope, the last time we will be addressing the Council during our current term, I would like to conclude by commending the Spanish presidency for its outstanding leadership over the past month and by thanking all our colleagues in the Secretariat for the courtesy and cooperation they have shown me and my delegation over the past two years.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom supports all efforts to maintain a full, nationwide cessation of hostilities and an end to the bloodshed in Syria. For that reason, we welcome the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2336 (2016) today. In the coming days and weeks the world will be watching to make sure that the ceasefire is upheld.

We call on all the parties to adhere to the terms of the ceasefire. Those with influence over them, particularly the Russian and Turkish guarantors, must use it to ensure that the ceasefire lasts. We are concerned about reports of violations on the ground. The ceasefire is the essential first step required to create the conditions for the return to political negotiations, which we all agree is the only way to end this terrible conflict. In order to ensure that, the confusion over some of the key texts and the discrepancies between them must be resolved. As the failure of previous cessations of hostilities has shown, monitoring the ceasefire will be crucial.

The role of the United Nations is essential. As guarantors of the agreement, Russia and Turkey must ensure that any monitoring measures are genuinely independent and closely coordinated with the United Nations and with the International Syria Support Group's ceasefire task force. Fundamental to the ceasefire's success is implementation, not just of this agreement and the resolution we have just voted on, but also of other Security Council resolutions, which, when they were agreed on, gave us a sadly short-lived optimism that the suffering of the Syrian people would see some respite.

First and foremost, all sides must ensure unfettered humanitarian access across the country, as is required by resolution 2328 (2016), adopted earlier this month. Secondly, the talks in Astana must be in support of the United Nations-led political process, under Special Envoy De Mistura. The United Kingdom will be a steadfast supporter of any steps towards an inclusive political settlement that realizes the aspiration for a peaceful Syria, as set out in resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/522, annex).

As we end 2016, we can all agree that it is time to end the bloodshed in Syria. The ceasefire is still very fresh, and the situation on the ground will develop in the coming days and weeks. But if the ceasefire holds, I sincerely hope that it can provide a foundation for a breakthrough in the wider political process, and that 2017 turns out to be a far better year for the people of Syria than 2016 has been. Following a political transition, we will all have to support reconstruction.

Mr. Martins (Angola): Like the other members of the Security Council, Angola voted in favour of resolution 2336 (2016), and we would like to thank the delegation of the Russian Federation for convening today's meeting for the unanimous adoption of a resolution aimed at establishing a ceasefire agreement in the Syrian Arab Republic. We should consider it a real contribution to creating a path to peace and stability in a country that has occupied such a central place on our agenda during the past year, the year that is about to end. We would like to commend the Russian Federation for the central role that it has played in achieving that goal, and Turkey for the joint agreement that has been signed. We look forward to the peace talks to be held in Astana.

Obviously, there are no perfect agreements. What is essential is that the efforts should focus on the common goal of achieving peace and enabling the citizens of Syria to reconcile and rebuild their nation within parameters that they establish themselves, with the support of the international community. The Security Council resolution remains a relevant and important instrument for resolving the conflict. We are aware that its unanimous adoption has reinforced the chances for peace, and that unanimity represents a very good way of ending the year with a decision that we have repeatedly insisted on — that the solution must be a political one. This decision will enable that.

As Angola's membership of the Security Council ends — and coincides with the very last day of 2016 — I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our colleagues and the members of the Council a very peaceful and prosperous new year.

Mr. Toro-Carnevali (Bolivian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are greatly encouraged by the Council's unanimous adoption today of resolution 2336 (2016), submitted by the Russian Federation and Turkey in support of the urgent call by the Syrian people and the international community for a cessation of hostilities on the ground and a speedy start to negotiations for a political settlement that can provide a comprehensive peaceful solution to the conflict in Syria. In that regard, we welcome the meeting to be held in Astana at the end of January between the Syrian Government and the opposition, and we wish it every success. It will be particularly important to ensure that the agreements forged by Russia and Turkey — along with resolution 2328 (2016), adopted on 19 December — form an integral part of the determined efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, establishing once and for all the conditions and standards for all the national, regional and international stakeholders

and supporting the peace process. With the adoption of today's resolution, Venezuela leaves the Security Council proud of having helped the Syrian people to reach this important moment.

We congratulate you, Mr. President, on the success of your presidency, and we thank the Secretariat for all the support it has given us over the past two years.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): The Ukrainian delegation voted in favour of resolution 2336 (2016) today for one reason, which is that it focuses on establishing a ceasefire regime. While numerous questions linger about the scope and substance of all the understandings reached in Ankara on 29 December, we support all efforts to put an end to the bloodshed and alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. In that regard, we would like to stress that, in order to make the ceasefire work, the necessary level of confidence and trust — which is clearly missing after so many years of the conflict in Syria — must be established among all the parties. The latest reports of fighting in Wadi Barada testify to the fragility of the situation.

Although it is a part of human nature to hope for the best, given the track record of broken ceasefires and the deficit of trust in one of the guarantors of the latest one, at this point we would caution the Council to be prudent and to keep a watchful eye on further developments as we enter the new year.

As this is hopefully the last time we will meet under the Spanish presidency, let me conclude by expressing our sincere thanks and congratulations to the delegation of Spain for its dedicated efforts and leadership during this difficult month.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the Russian Federation and Turkey for this proposal. Although the text is imperfect could have been further improved, we voted in its favour. Today, similar to what occured on 19 December when the Security Council adopted resolution 2328 (2016), members had additional consultations to occur and for adjustments to be made to the original text. To our satisfaction, that strengthened the text and made possible its unanimous adoption.

As indicated in today's resolution 2336 (2016), it will be necessary to implement the provisions of resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016), and to harmonize the forthcoming Astana talks with the United-Nations-backed negotiations. We sincerely hope that 2017 will be a better year for the Syrian Arab Republic and Syrians than the year ending today. With everyone participating, we can achieve a lasting cessation of hostilities and the resumption of successful political negotiations. We owe that to the tens of thousands of Syrian civilians who lost their lives in this terrible war.

In conclusion, I would like to pay tribute to the Spanish presidency for its leadership and the consistent coordinating role it played in achieving consensus among Council members during the month of December.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): With regard to the Syrian crisis, the efforts of my country have been focused on one priority, namely, putting an end to the suffering of the Syrian people. We are committed to that approach and support any approach that prioritizes the Syrian people, regardless of the interests that can be seen at play and which are the real cause of the suffering in that country. We have voted in favour of all resolutions put to vote in the Security Council that were aimed at providing access to humanitarian aid, regardless of the party that put those resolutions to vote.

With our partners Spain and New Zealand, we undertook an initiative to put an end to the hostilities and to ensure that humanitarian aid was delivered. We never hesitated to use our experience or diplomatic strength to attempt to resolve the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. That is why, and this is in parallel with our consistent position, we voted in favour of resolution 2336 (2016), which calls for an end to the hostilities. We must act quickly to remedy the high level of violence and to launch the diplomatic process. We know that this will not lead to a complete cessation of the violence and the hostilities but, at the very least, it is a step in the right direction, and one on which we can continue to build.

Initiatives aimed at resolving the Syrian crisis have multiplied over the last few years. As with any other initiative, there are no complete or ideal initiatives. We need real intentions that will result in a final settlement. Regardless of the nature of those approaches and initiatives, all of us must look at the previous frameworks agreed upon at the international level and base our actions on them as we we move forward.

We backed today's resolution, including the references to resolution 2254 (2015) and the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), which are the foundations for any settlement. Furthermore, we

wish to reiterate that the current challenges, which will continue for a long time, require a comprehensive political approach based on those frameworks. It is true that we see a military approach being taken on the ground, but that can never be the solution. For that reason we call upon all Syrian parties to act in a responsible way, especially with respect to their communities and their people. During this transition phase, dialogue should be initiated between the Government and the opposition as rapidly as possible in order to find a Syrian solution without any foreign intervention. That solution should protect the territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and result in the realization of the aspirations of the Syrian people, far from the reality of violence and extremism.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): There are no military solutions to the protracted and complex Syrian crisis. That is a conclusion the Security Council has reached repeatedly here in this Chamber, and that is why the Senegalese delegation, having backed resolution 2236 (2016), submitted by the Russian Federation, is gratified to see that it enjoyed unanimous support. The Senegalese delegation reaffirms that a solution conducive to the resolution of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic will involve a political process, without exception, and be Syrian-led on the basis of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), as underscored in the various resolutions adopted by the Council, in particular resolutions 2118 (2013), 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016).

The Senegalese delegation is gratified by the fact that this resolution refers to swift and unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance throughout Syrian territory. For that reason our delegation would like to congratulate the delegation of the Russian Federation for its constructive spirit and the flexibility it consistently demonstrated throughout the negotiation process of what has today become resolution 2336 (2016). There could be no nicer gift for the Syrian people, who have suffered so long from this conflict.

Before I conclude, I would like to convey to the Spanish delegation and to Ambassador Oyarzun Marchesi the warm congratulations of the Senegalese delegation for a very productive Council presidency during the month of December. I wish you a happy new year.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China): China welcomes the signing of the ceasefire agreement between the Syrian Government and the opposition, and appreciates the positive result achieved by the Russian Federation and Turkey in facilitating its conclusion. China welcomes the fact that the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2336 (2016). This reflects the support of the United Nations and the international community for a comprehensive ceasefire in the Syrian Arab Republic and a political settlement of the Syrian issue. The resolution is conducive to the strengthening of mutual trust among the conflicting parties, the advancement of the political process, the easing of the humanitarian situation in the country and the efforts to combat terrorism. China hopes that the Syrian Government and the opposition groups concerned will effectively and comprehensively implement the ceasefire agreement and calls on other opposition groups to join the ceasefire arrangement as soon as possible.

The political solution is the only way out for Syria. The international community should seize the current favourable opportunity and work on the basis of respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria to create conditions for relaunching the political process in the country as soon as possible. China hopes that the United Nations and the international community will work towards the comprehensive implementation of the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016).

Special Envoy De Mistura has announced the relaunching of Geneva talks in February 2017. We hope that the peace talks will promote the political process in Syria with a view to achieving positive results at an early date. China hopes that the Astana meeting, as an important component part of the political process led by Syria and an important step towards the relaunching of the Geneva peace talks will play a positive role in advancing the political settlement of the question of Syria. China calls on the Syrian parties to cherish this hard-won achievement, set as their priorities the fundamental interests of their nation and the security of their people, come back to the track of dialogue and consultations, and work under the principle of Syrian-owned and Syria-led processes so as to reach a political settlement acceptable to all.

China has taken active part in promoting the political process in Syria and is willing to continue to work with the rest of the international community for a comprehensive, fair and appropriate settlement of the Syrian issue.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): About two weeks ago, in the midst of a difficult setting, the Security Council managed to find convergence and unanimity to endorse the evacuation operation out of eastern Aleppo (resolution 2328 (2016)). As a result of the Council's action, the swift deployment of United Nations personnel to oversee and monitor the evacuation alongside International Committee of the Red Cross and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, a successful evacuation with minimal reported instances of human rights violations and abuses, was undertaken.

Under a similarly difficult and dynamic situation on the ground, the Council is meeting today to discharge its responsibility to effectively address the Syrian conflict. We appreciate the efforts of both the Russian Federation and Turkey in brokering the nationwide ceasefire that commenced two days ago and is currently holding. We are convinced that the Council's backing of the ceasefire will only add to its legitimacy. Our support of a ceasefire and an end to the fighting signals to ordinary Syrian civilian men, women and children that we are not oblivious to their prolonged suffering.

We have collectively on many occasions pronounced, first, undivided support for Special Envoy De Mistura's effort to bring together conflicting parties to the negotiating table, and secondly, that the only resolution to the conflict is through a political process. It is our belief that the Council's support for the ceasefire and the subsequent Astana process will lead to a more substantive political dialogue among the conflicting parties, hence our support for resolution 2336 (2016) just adopted.

As Malaysia will be vacating its seat on the Council in a few hours' time, my delegation hopes that the positive momentum of the Council's action on the situation in Syria over the past few weeks continues to gather strength for the sake of the long-suffering Syrians, especially civilians, non-combatants, women and children.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you and the Spanish delegation for the productive and excellent stewardship of the Council this month. I would also like to wish all colleagues a happy and prosperous new year.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): Japan welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2336 (2016). Japan also welcomes the efforts of the Russian Federation and Turkey to bring about a nationwide cessation of hostilities. Japan supported the draft resolution because we hope that the cessation of hostilities across Syria can open a path to the fundamental improvement of the devastating humanitarian situation there.

As with resolution 2328 (2016), adopted unanimously two weeks ago (see S/PV.7841), the United Nations should coordinate humanitarian assistance efforts under this cessation of hostilities. We do not want to hear any more reports by the United Nations or other implementing partners of obstructions or delays in gaining access to besieged or hard-to-reach areas by the Syrian Government. We urge the Syrian Government to take measures to allow immediate and unhindered access.

Japan calls upon the guarantors of the cessation of hostilities to elaborate monitoring mechanisms with the United Nations and the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) task force. We take note of the serious concern about the possibility of further attacks on civilians in all areas of Syria. Japan urges Russia and Turkey, as guarantors, to fully address these concerns. As prescribed in paragraph 3 of the resolution, we look forward to the Astana meeting to be held in January. Japan hopes the meeting will have the participation of key regional stakeholders and will meaningfully contribute to Special Envoy De Mistura's formal political process.

As a member of the Council and of the ISSG, Japan reiterates its determination to contribute responsibly to addressing the situation in Syria. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Spain for its excellent presidency this month. I would also like to thank the five outgoing non-permanent members for their assiduous efforts in the Council during their two-year terms.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I did not intend to speak here today, as it seems to me that resolution 2336 (2016), which we have just adopted, speaks for itself. But as all members of the Security Council have spoken it would probably be odd, to say the least, if one of the sponsors of the resolution and a member of the Council simply stayed silent. This would probably be seen as perhaps not endorsing or approving of what has been said by my colleagues. Far be it from this.

As I take the floor, the natural first step is to thank all of the members of the Council for voting in favour of the resolution we elaborated together with the Turkish delegation. We would like to individually

thank the delegation of Turkey for its very substantive contribution to the work on the resolution.

All of us know that this has been a very difficult year — a year which comes to an end in our capital in only two and a half hours. It was very difficult from the point of view of the work of the Security Council on a Syrian settlement, but the fact that we are concluding this year by unanimously adopting two such resolutions means that if all of us together look together at certain objectives rather than attempt to gain self-interested benefit, then we are able to make important decisions.

During this year, as all of us will recall, a number of very serious efforts were undertaken to achieve a radical improvement in the settlement of the Syrian crisis. All of us remember the numerous meetings of our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov, and the United States Secretary of State, John Kerry, always leading to serious agreements that, for reasons that I am not going to go into now, unfortunately remained unfulfilled. At the end of this year, the Russian Federation and Turkey, alongside the Syrian Government, in contact with opposition groups, took it upon themselves to reach a number of very important agreements that were enshrined in the documents published on 29 December and which were then circulated as an official document of the Security Council.

This is a very important initiative. The resolution adopted by us today speaks to the need to comply with a cessation of hostilities regime in Syria and to the very important meeting in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, which, in Astana, in just two and a half hours, will become a member of the Security Council. At that meeting, delegations of the opposition and the Government will for the first time meet face to face, all of this in the context of efforts that have been undertaken under the Security Council's mandate pursuant to resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016) and other very well-known documents. All of this is enshrined in the resolution adopted here today. It is very important indeed that the Security Council today backed these efforts made by Russia and Turkey.

I do not wish to level criticisms today, but I would like to delicately convey to my colleagues that this is a very complicated process. Everything we achieve is the result of enormous effort, so let us be clear. I urge members to help us, and if they cannot or do not want to help then I urge them not to complicate things, cast doubt on the agreements reached or attempt to reinterpret them in some way. I would ask them not to simply repeat outdated clichés ad infinitum. Some representatives have been repeating the same clichés for six years now, despite the fact that it achieves nothing. That is not helpful. We must work very seriously to ensure that, in 2017, we are able to achieve a political settlement to the crisis in Syria. We are convinced that if the international community is guided by the objective of upholding the interests of the Syrian people and restoring stability in the region as a whole, then we can achieve success.

My last comment is an expression of gratitude to the Council members who are leaving us today, including the delegation of Spain, which during this long difficult month of 31 days has carried out duties that are coming to an end almost at midnight on the very last day.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement briefly in my national capacity.

Spain voted in favour of resolution 2336 (2016) and welcomes its unanimous adoption. We express our sincere gratitude to Turkey and the Russian Federation for their efforts in achieving this consensus, having reached an agreement on the cessation of hostilities, and moving forward towards a political solution to the crisis in Syria.

We voted in favour of the resolution while bearing in mind the unspeakable suffering of the Syrian people and the fact that the monitoring of the ceasefire must be conducted transparently and impartially and that information must be provided to the Security Council in a timely manner. We are also aware that the next steps in the political process must be carried out under the auspices of the United Nations. We want to be very clear on this point. It is not enough for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to simply be associated with the Astana talks; he must play a central role and ensure that we do not lose sight of the provisions of resolution 2254 (2015). In that regard, we once again welcome the changes that have been made to the text of the resolution, which was submitted by the Russian Federation.

Finally, the European Union and its 28 member States have much to contribute to Syrian initiatives. The European Union is not only the country's main financial donor, but it will also be a key player in rebuilding the country when the necessary political conditions are in place. Only a united, democratic and peaceful Syria will be able to put a lasting end to the terrorism wrought by Da'esh. Spain is bidding farewell to the Security

Council in the hope that the resolution that we adopted today will be a first step in that direction.

I honestly do not see a better way to conclude Spain's presidency of the Security Council. I already bid farewell to Council members on 21 December and, at that time, I said that if we were to meet again, it would only be in order to receive good news, and that is indeed the case — a resolution adopted unanimously by all 15 members. I would like to thank Council members once again for the kind words I heard in the Chamber today. This effort would not have been successful without the help of all Council members.

There are only 10 hours left in the Spanish presidency. I believe that we will not have any further meetings in the next 10 hours, so I will take this opportunity to definitively wish all Council members a very happy New Year. I strongly hope that the people of Syria will achieve peace. As a continuing member of the General Assembly, Spain will remain very attentive to the work carried out in this Chamber. I also wish our dear friends from Sweden, who are seated here in the Chamber, every success during their presidency, which promises to be very favourable.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no further speakers on my list.

The meeting rose at 1.45 p.m.